

# The Tallit (prayer shawl)

The **tallit** [pronunciation, tallis] is the robe with which the worshipper is wrapped during prayer and hence often referred to as a "prayer shawl," though this is not the traditional Jewish name for the garment, which was not originally associated particularly with prayer, usually morning prayers. It was also used as was used as a garment, bed sheet, and burial shroud. It is also used as a canopy in a Jewish wedding. The tallit is traditionally woven of wool or silk, in white, with black, blue or white stripes at the ends. The silk tallit vary in size from about 36 × 54 inches to 72 × 96 inches. The woolen tallit is proportionately larger (sometimes reaching to the ankle) and is made of two lengths sewed together, the stitching being covered with a narrow silk ribbon.

## Tzitzit

In Numbers 15:37-40, the Israelites are commanded to put **tzitzit** ("fringes") [pronunciation: tzitzis] on their garments in order to remind them of God's laws. But in the book of Deuteronomy (22:12) **it is stated that these fringes have to be placed on the four corners of the garment, from which the Rabbis conclude that only four-cornered garments have to have tzitzit affixed to them. The tzitzits were cords tied to the four corners of the prayer garment. The tallit has special twined and knotted fringes known as tzitzit attached to its four corners.** They were to be six in number. According to the biblical commandment, a blue thread is included in the tzitzit.

It is these **tzitzits**, or fringes, of the garment that the woman touched to be healed by Jesus. She said in her heart, "If I can just touch the hem (tzitzits) or his garment (his outer prayer shawl with its fringes) I will be healed." She had a bloody disease and therefore was unclean for at least twelve years by Jewish law. She was not to touch anyone, much less the Messiah. No one was allowed to touch another person's tallit unless they were family. Thus, Jesus responded to the woman, "Daughter, your faith has healed you God in peace and be freed from your suffering." (see Matthew 9:20, Mark 5:25, and Luke 8:43ff)

**Where did she get the idea that touching the hem (tzitzit) of his garment would heal her? Perhaps it was from the fact that Jesus was the Man of God, the Man of Prayer who wore a prayer shawl when in public and she concluded his prayer shawl would connect her directly to God.**

Another idea expressed by some commentators was that she was trusting Malachi 4:2, "Unto them that fear my Name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings." **The tallit itself resembles the wings under which we should trust. Psalm 91 affirms the same truth.** "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler." (Psalms 91:4) It had long been understood that the Tallit represented that "secret place of the Most High and the shadow of His wing. (Spread out the shawl and see the wings.)

## Numbers 15 (NIV)

37 The LORD said to Moses, 38 "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `Throughout the generations to come you are to **make tassels** on the corners of your garments, **with a blue cord on each tassel**. 39 You will have these tassels **to look at** and so you will **remember all the commands** of the LORD, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. 40 Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God. 41 I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the LORD your God."

## Our Attitude in Prayer

- I come into the secret place of the Most High
- I come into the presence of God through the blood of Christ
- I am covered by his wing where I safely trust
- His truth is my shield and defense.
- I come boldly as His child

## Hebrews 4:16

*Let us therefore approach God's throne of grace, with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in the time of need.*

## Putting on the Tallit

Stretch the tallit before you, holding it with both hands, and recite this blessing:

**Blessed are you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe**

**Who has sanctified us with His commandments and  
commanded us to wrap ourselves in the tzitzit**



After reciting the blessing, throw the tallit over your shoulders like a cape and bring your hands together in front of your face briefly, covering your head. Then adjust the tallit comfortably on your shoulders. The tallit should be draped over the shoulders like a shawl or a cape, not around the neck like a scarf.